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FLOOR DEBATE

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abuse themselves, this becomes an issue that spans generations. Finally, the sons of teen mothers are 2.7 times more likely to be incarcerated than the sons of adult mothers. Girls belong to gangs. Because boys and young men have long dominated the gang culture, researchers have been slow to consider why girls become involved in gangs and what risks they face because of gang membership. Researchers have seen females as playing a primarily sexual role or one of only peripheral importance in relation to male gang members. Although the number of girls involved in gangs remains relatively small, 3.6 percent of the youth identified by law enforcement agencies as gang members are female, gangs do pose specific risks for young females. Girls seem to be attracted to gangs out of a desire for safety or power and a sense of belonging. Studies of female gang members show that many have come from homes and with high incidences of sexual abuse, domestic violence and family dysfunction. Growing up in poverty, isolated from economic mainstreams, marginalized because of race, class and academic failure, girls most likely to affiliate with gangs tend to feel hopeless about their future. Far from offering girls a safe haven, however, gang membership puts adolescent girls at an increased risk of victimization and violence.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR SUTTLE: Girls are often treated as the sexual property of a male gang member. During initiations girls may be beaten, sexually assaulted and gang raped. As gang members, girls face increased risk of unsafe sex, sexual abuse, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and suicide. In addition, gang involvement complicates or interferes with the girl's ability to complete the developmental tasks of adolescence. Staying in the gang may require that a girl tolerate ongoing physical and sexual abuse, suppressing her anger, resentment, humiliation and shame. Some girls eventually become perpetrators of violence themselves. Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Suttle. (Visitors introduced.) Further debate on AM1528. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, to